

How do I begin building my website?

1. Register a domain

Registering a domain name secures your Internet address and is the first step in establishing an online presence.

2. Determine the audience

Is the site goal to provide information about a product or service -like a portfolio for an architect or artist?

Or, are you selling something?

Considering the purpose of the site, and who you want to reach will guide content development. Thinking about purpose will also help when considering which features --gallery, shopping cart, or blog, are needed.

3. Collect written and visual content materials

Designing and producing a website is a creative process. The content we start with at the beginning of the development journey is probably not going to end up intact in the final version.

But we need to start somewhere and even the sketchiest of initial ideas can form the basis of a mature concept. As ideas begin to flow the architecture begins to emerge and content can be logically partitioned into different sections. Structuring the content along logical lines makes it easy for a site visitor to find information.

4. Think about site features

Different features --blog, forum, shopping cart, picture gallery, RSS news feed, animation, calendar, content management system (CMS), are incorporated into a website to help deliver information in a clear and straightforward manner to a site visitor.

When considering site features, it should be remembered that just because a feature exists doesn't mean it needs to be used. Unless a website is meant to entertain, it might be best to include only those features that help your visitor find the information they seek, and those that facilitate site maintenance.

How much will it cost to build a website?

A number of factors determine the cost of developing a website. Some of the costs are fixed and can be predicted, others are not. Keep in mind that building a website is a one-of-a kind project, hand-built and customized to suit your specific needs.

1. Domain Registration and Web Hosting

Domain: Coming up with an available domain name to register is an important preliminary step.

This is a fixed annual cost, usually about \$10 a year.

Hosting: A hosting company runs and maintains commercial servers 24 hours a day, every day. The files that make up your site reside on these servers. The annual cost of hosting depends on levels of technical support, number of databases and marketing services used, and so on.

This fixed annual cost can be as little as \$150 per year, but may be more.

2. Content Development

Content is where your website begins and ends. If there is no content, there can be no website. So:

- Do you have a logo?
- Do you have text?
- Do you have images?

If not, content needs to be created. While we can be a sounding board for ideas about content, you know best what you want to accomplish, and what concerns your customers. Having a good idea of who your customers are and what they might be looking for will guide the development of site content.

The cost to develop content is not a fixed cost.

3. Content Organization and Preparation

Once the content has been generated, it is organized into logical sections to form a content structure. Designing this structure is known as information architecture. As the organization of content proceeds, it will become apparent what additional content is required, or if existing content needs to be altered, or expanded upon.

Simultaneously, a working layout for the site can be sketched out. Having an idea of content allows for decisions about appearance such as how many columns the site will have; what would be an appropriate navigational structure, image placement, fonts and font color, and which features would be appropriate for site functionality.

The cost of content organization, interface layout, and deciding on the feature-set, is not a fixed cost.

4. Code Development

Once content has been generated and a layout for the website is settled upon, the process of developing code begins. This includes: writing the presentation and logic code; setting up data bases; incorporating third party application in the feature-set of the site such as:

- A photo gallery
- A calendar to display events
- A content management system (CMS)
For editorial control over certain sections of the site.
- An e-commerce system
For sales in a secure environment
- A blog
To generate new content
For search engine visibility
For customer feedback

The cost of code development is not a fixed cost.

5. Cost

Outsourced tasks: including but not limited to custom software application, photography, content generation, editing, or proofing billed at cost plus 20%.

Fixed cost estimate:

- Domain registration: about \$10 per year
- Basic hosting: approximately \$60 per year and up
- Monthly SIte maintenance: Starting at \$50 per month

General Project Estimate

A placeholder site of one page begins at \$495. You must supply the content.

The generation of content --text, imagery, graphics, is in addition to this fee and billed at an hourly rate.

Any site of more than one page will cost more than a one page site. This cost depends on the time needed to develop content --text, imagery, graphics, and configure specialized third party applications.

Building a website as a customized, hand-built item, designed to fit your specific needs and requirements, involves a process that has many unknowns. Like any other creative process, as the project progresses new ideas pop-up and modifications to original concepts take place. How many changes there will be and how much time it takes to develop ideas is anyone's guess.

Any quote is only an estimate, and subject to change without notice.

6. Payment

All aspects of project development are billed at a flat hourly rate of \$65

Post launch maintenance is billed at a flat rate of \$32.50 per half hour.

- First payment: Placeholder site: \$250 *
- First payment: All other sites: \$650 *
- Second payment: Upon interface approval
- Third payment: prior to host-server upload
- Final payment: after testing to the uploaded site
- Post launch modification: \$32.50 per half hour

* Non-refundable after 5 days.

NOTE: If final payment has not been received within 60 day from the date of the final invoice, the website will be taken off-line until final payment has been received.